Youth Engagement Playbook for Cities:

How to tackle the climate crisis through collaboration with youth

November 2021

C40 CITIES

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Cover image: **Mayor Aki-Sawyerr & Youth Climate Leaders C40 World Mayors Summit 2019** © Sarah Bastin

Purpose

This playbook has been produced by the C40 Global Youth and Mayors Forum to help strengthen meaningful youth engagement in climate action in cities across the world. We hope this playbook can help youth leaders and cities to spark and accelerate immediate, on the ground action on climate change and foster a collaborative spirit between mayors and youth climate leaders as they stand against the greatest threat to humanity - climate breakdown.

This document has been informed by insights shared by youth climate leaders and contributions from 15 cities. In the following pages, you will find key considerations that cities may find useful in their approach to youth engagement. We have included case studies that showcase a variety of approaches to meaningful youth engagement that have driven increased and more inclusive climate action, including city-level youth climate councils that are proving a powerful and popular way of working for mayors and youth leaders alike.

The playbook also contains top tips for young people who are engaging with cities and decision-makers, gathered from youth climate leaders. These have been presented in an Annex at the end of the document. Finally, this document includes key resources for cities.

We want this playbook to spark conversations in cities about their experiences with youth climate engagement. We are keen to learn about what works in cities and incorporate new learnings in a future edition of this playbook. Please share all thoughts and feedback with the C40 youth team at youth@c40.org

Foreword

Mayor Claudia López of Bogotá, C40 Vice Chair and Global Youth and Mayors Forum Co-Chair

This playbook aims to encourage cities to heed to calls by young people for them to be more meaningfully included in climate policy decision-making processes. It provides practical tips for cities to recognise and engage with youth on issues that affect their lives, and demonstrates, through case studies, how cities are actively collaborating with young people on climate change.

In Bogotá, we recognise that the full participation of youth in planning and policy is key to shaping a better future, which is why we have taken an inclusive approach to climate actions and planning processes. Moreover, we are taking steps to institutionalise spaces for democratic representation for young people's voices, where we hope that the environmental and climate agenda can play a decisive role.

Protesting has been a crucial and effective way for young people to take action on the climate crisis. However, this should not be the only option for youth to hold decision-makers to account – this Playbook provides them with complementary and strategic ways to advocate.

Decision makers must collaborate with young people to move policies that deliver climate action, not only at city-wide level but at a local and neighbourhood scale. Young people are an important force for change when engaged and empowered purposefully and effectively, and I am certain that if more cities actively incorporate the views, voices and ideas of young people in policy making processes, our efforts to tackle the climate crisis will be enhanced in significant ways.

I hope this Youth Engagement playbook for Cities promotes intergenerational partnership that can drive inclusive action on climate change in cities across the world.

Membership of the 2021-22 C40 Global Youth & Mayors Forum

The C40 Global Youth & Mayors Forum is a first-of-its-kind platform that brings together 14 youth climate leaders and 6 mayors to work together over the next year to shape how the vision of a Global Green New Deal can be made a reality in cities across the world.

Mayors

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Introduction

[Climate justice] *"insists on a shift from a discourse on greenhouse gases and melting ice caps into a civil rights movement with the people and communities most vulnerable to climate impacts at its heart."*

– Mary Robinson, former President of Ireland and Chair of the Elders

"You cannot have climate justice without racial justice. It isn't justice if it doesn't include everyone."

– Vanessa Nakate, climate activist

In the context of the COVID health emergency, 80% of young people agreed with the statement: *"My government should make accelerating climate action a key goal of the economic recovery."*

– Global Shapers Community & World Economic Forum Report, 2021

The action we take today will determine the kind of world our children and grandchildren will inherit, and the future of all life on our planet. The number of natural disasters, resource shortages, and other crises has continued to rise, and extreme weather events have become more severe and frequent all over the world. What is worse, those who have contributed the least to climate change are the most vulnerable to its impacts. At the same time, we have seen a new wave of youth climate leaders call for urgent, transformative action to curb climate breakdown and build a green, just future that has focused attention and minds on the climate crisis like never before.

Around the world, young people are demanding action on the climate crisis to secure a just, sustainable future. As the youngest generation, their lives are most at stake. Young people have put the climate emergency on the global political agenda, demanding that global leaders respond and take action in an equitable and just way. Mayors from the world's leading cities have heard this call and agree: we must push forward with courage and ambition to change the status quo that has generated this crisis.

Mayors are doing a lot, but we all need to do more to avert the climate crisis. Delivering climate action in line with a 1.5°C target means doing everything in our power to bring emissions down today, and pushing at the global level for the action and resources needed now to transform economies so they are green, just, and work for everyone - including by providing much needed finance to the Global South. To deliver this, C40 mayors must collaborate with a broad coalition of actors including youth leaders, unions, business leaders, civil society groups and regional and national governments. C40's Global Youth Initiative will play a crucial part in building this coalition and support cities to work with youth climate leaders.

Young people are calling for their voices to be included, facilitated and represented in political and economic decision-making processes. By including young people who recognise the urgency of this crisis, and the importance of an intersectional, intergenerational campaign to secure climate justice - at all governance levels, including at the city level, as full partners in the design, implementation and evaluation of policies - cities are able to move further and faster to build more just, inclusive and equitable societies.

Together, C40 mayors and young leaders from the climate movement are working together to shape a vision of a Global Green New Deal that can be made a reality in cities across the world.

Providing spaces to meaningfully engage young people as full partners in climate change decision-making processes can help inform and improve climate action plans in cities. The COVID-19 crisis has significantly impacted young people in terms of their education, employment and mental health. During the pandemic, young people have felt isolated and excluded from engaging on issues related to climate change, both in the streets and in decision-making spaces, although efforts have been made to organise and mobilise online.

Cities have a key role to play in supporting the active participation and engagement of young people. Cities can enable work to empower youth climate leaders by meaningfully strengthening existing youth engagement platforms or developing youth climate councils in cities.

Across the youth climate movement, there is widespread anger and disappointment that national governments are not doing enough to respond to the climate emergency - as of October 2021, the world is still on track for a devastating 3 degrees of warming by the end of this century. Young people are keen to collaborate to solve this problem - but are wary of being used in a tokenistic way and for photo opportunities. Young people want meaningful opportunities to contribute to society and the climate as a whole.

Cities have the opportunity to create space for young people to make a difference in climate action planning at a local level, and to help amplify their voices calling for action aligned with keeping temperatures to 1.5 degrees at national and international levels.

By actively involving young people in decision-making processes on issues that affect them, including climate change, cities can gain credibility with communities who might have lost trust in climate action processes due to their historically low representation in relevant decision-making bodies. Youth councils or equivalent platforms aimed at meaningful engagement and participatory policy-making can be an effective way to receive input and feedback from young people. To achieve meaningful youth engagement, there needs to be appropriate mandates, capacity-building and support for youth perspectives, as well as a recognition of the expertise and interest in climate issues carried by many youth climate activists.

Through active participation and empowerment, young people will be able to support cities in creating climate action plans that resonate across all communities. By creating an encouraging environment for youth engagement, cities will be better placed to understand concerns of marginalized voices, and translate them into meaningful climate action.

Key considerations for engaging youth climate leaders

"Young people are the climate leaders of today, and this is a moment for us to stand with them to embrace science, move with urgency, and turn the tide on the climate crisis. Government is at its best when we empower our young people to lead, and that's why we've lifted up their voices in Los Angeles with our Mayor's Youth Council for Climate Action. By empowering young people everywhere to speak up and demand that we act with conviction, courage, and vision to save the planet, we can make sure that our climate solutions reflect the perspectives of those who know the future belongs to them."

– Mayor Eric Garcetti, C40 Chair and Mayor of Los Angeles

Mayor Garcetti C40 World Mayors Summit 2019 © Sarah Bastin

1. Let young people lead the way

Engagement with youth climate leaders should always be genuine and aimed at empowerment. There are many ways to do this, taking into account the context of the city and how local young people organise. For example, it may work to create a formalised 'youth climate council' in some cities, whereas it may be more effective to engage with an existing coalition of youth climate groups in another. It is important to understand the local context and directly seek advice from young people as to how they'd like to be involved.

Effective youth engagement must be and feel meaningful – this will help give the best chance for the city to strengthen alliances and enable collaboration on climate action. That means young people's contributions must have a genuine impact on decision-making in the city and help shape outcomes – they also must be fully aware of how this is happening.

Cities should consider providing space for young people to inform the agenda of discussions when speaking with high-level officials and representatives directly, and play facilitating roles in meetings. Cities should also aim to help young people self-organise and provide physical or virtual spaces where they can do so, so they can arrive at meetings with city leaders with well-prepared views.

How your city can put this into practice

- ☑ Work with youth to establish a Youth Climate Council or equivalent body.
- ☑ Enable young people to help co-create meeting agendas.
- ☑ Discuss with young people how they'd like to select or elect youth members.
- ☑ Arrange meetings between young people and high-level officials.
- ☑ Make space for youth to facilitate or co-facilitate meetings.
- ☑ Provide physical or virtual meeting spaces for youth activists to organise.
- ☑ Have at least one dedicated city staff member tasked with leading youth engagement.

Los Angeles, USA

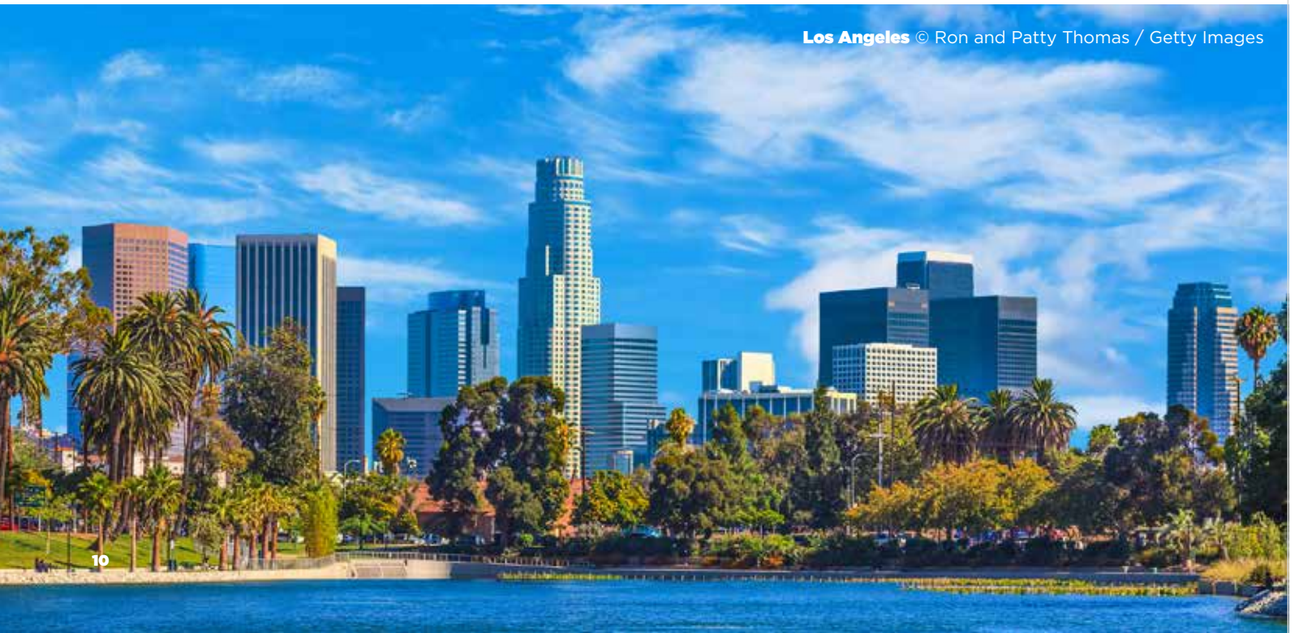
CASE STUDY

Los Angeles established its Mayor's Youth Council for Climate Action (MYCCA) in 2019. The Council is defined as a critical bridge between youth leaders and government leadership. This group of young people supports the city's climate action agenda by developing plans and objectives for the year to help drive ambitious climate action, raise awareness and engage city residents on climate solutions. MYCCA members have a one-year tenure, and Council meetings are hosted by the Mayor's Office of Sustainability. Additionally, subteam meetings are held in between Council meetings to work on specific projects. Council members also participate in off site visits to see and learn more about real world examples of sustainability initiatives. The mayor joins at least one meeting a year to receive updates, and actively involves youth climate leaders in decision-making related to the city's climate commitments. Leaders from the city government, environmental NGOs and local businesses are also invited to join council meetings on a regular basis.

The MYCCA has also recently started their LA Climate Stories Initiative which uses storytelling to raise awareness around the impacts of climate change on local communities and the actions people take in response.

"One area that the Mayor's Youth Council for Climate Action shines is its ability to connect a highly diverse set of youth from across the city to one another to share experiences, develop relationships, and create a foundation for future collaboration beyond their term as Council members. This dynamic also extends to Council members' engagement with government leadership. Perceptions on both sides were altered through their involvement in meetings inspiring both the youth and government officials to view one another differently."

– City of Los Angeles



Los Angeles © Ron and Patty Thomas / Getty Images

Lima, Peru

CASE STUDY

Youth represent the diverse nature of Lima and have played a key role in enriching dialogue, bringing in fresh ideas, creativity and enthusiasm into city decision making processes.

In 2020, as part of the design process of the Local Climate Change Plan of Lima, a total of 33 youth organizations provided their inputs and comments through a series of workshops focused on integrating their perspective of the future in a climate change context and setting the foundations for the development of the 2050 vision of the plan. As a way of sustaining youth engagement on Lima's Local Climate Change Plan, a roadmap on the long term plan of the work has been established. The roadmap incorporates key actions in the fields of governance, education and communication.

As part of this commitment, since 2021, the organization Peruvian Youth Facing Climate Change has represented youth as a member of the Metropolitan Lima Environmental Commission (CAMET). As part of CAMET's actions, youth have an active participation in the Metropolitan Technical Group on Climate Change and Water Resources, a forum in which they support the strategies, projects, ordinances and decrees linked to the climate management of the city. This Forum also enables the Peruvian Youth Facing Climate Change to articulate the issues, opinions and contributions from youth organizations not represented in CAMET.

Additionally, a formal space to annually engage on the Local Climate Change Plan has also been established - this includes the active participation of youth and provides young people with an opportunity to engage the mayor on their proposals, observations and concerns about the local climate action agenda.

Lima © Myriam Borzee / Getty Images

2. Be inclusive and equitable

One of the strengths of the current youth climate movement is its diversity. It has been incredibly powerful to see so many youth climate leaders emerge from across the Global South and marginalised communities across the world, bringing valuable perspectives and skills to the broader climate movement as well as the strong leadership roles taken on by women and girls.

It's therefore important for cities to ensure youth engagement is done in a way that makes everyone feel welcome. Cities should ensure that youth engagement spaces are welcoming to people of all genders, ethnicities, socio-economic backgrounds, sexual orientations, and abilities.

Young people are likely to present ideas and solutions that are different from how a city would approach things. We encourage cities to listen, do their own research and engage with those views respectfully, considering how these new perspectives might aid climate action.

We advise that cities also proactively monitor which communities and local organisations they engage with, and then ensure that efforts are made to increase engagement with people or groups who may be missing from that list.

C40 has developed an Inclusive Community Engagement Playbook that can help strengthen your engagement efforts. There may also be engagement experts in cities - either city officials or local community groups - who could potentially help provide a bridge to under-represented groups.

How your city can put this into practice

- ☑ Be clear in all youth engagement meetings and external communications that youth from all backgrounds and identities are welcome and encouraged to participate.
- ☑ Take proactive measures to ensure any youth engagement structures represent the diversity and demographics of your city's youth e.g. consider setting targets and using quotas for marginalised and under-represented groups to better enable their participation.
- ☑ Map out youth and civil society organisations that you can engage with in your city.
- ☑ Listen to the views of young people and ensure that their perspectives are acknowledged and meaningfully engaged with.
- ☑ Think about enabling young people from marginalised backgrounds to fully participate by helping break down any barriers e.g. assisting with travel and internet data costs.

Auckland, New Zealand

CASE STUDY

Auckland has a dedicated Youth Empowerment team which supports capacity building, knowledge sharing, and best practices on youth engagement and youth development both internally in council and across the community. Council also supports a youth leadership programme which is largely made up of young people between the ages of 14 to 16 working to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, including climate change.

In establishing Te Tāruke-ā-Tāwhiri Auckland's Climate Plan, Council engaged with the city's major youth climate organisations, and had a particular focus on and dedicated resource for engaging rangatahi Māori (indigenous youth). Further, young people were brought into the city's climate plan engagement process through the city's youth advisory panel and youth strikers were also invited into the consultation process so that their priorities could be better understood. Auckland's Climate Plan, which was adopted in 2020, incorporated feedback from youth and identifies some specific actions for delivery by youth, as well as including youth in the governance of the plan.

Climate change remains an ongoing priority in the current political term (2019-to present). The city recently adopted its 10-year budget (2021-2031) which includes a climate action package of $152 million for new climate initiatives. Youth engagement on the 10-year budget included partnering with a regional youth organisation and delivering a targeted youth-friendly social media campaign and webpage to raise awareness and encourage submissions from youth. Included in the $152m climate action package was $6m to develop and deliver projects with rangatahi Māori aligned to their priorities for climate action. Key actions for the program, which is in its initial design phase, will likely include projects focused on restoring waterways, and the natural environment as well as promoting indigenous food sovereignty. The investment by council into a programme grounded in indigenous knowledge demonstrates the ongoing commitment they have to working with Māori as their partners under Te Tiriti o Waitangi (the founding document of New Zealand).

Auckland © Anastasia Ras / Getty Images

3. Use social media and digital tools to aid engagement

Younger generations generally have more experience and digital literacy when it comes to the world of technology. Cities should explore how best they can use digital tools and social media to better engage with young people.

Communications experts in the mayor's office may have some good suggestions about outreach to young people. It may also be worth directly engaging with young people and forming an advisory group on digital engagement. Young people have great ideas so it's important to listen and take them into account.

You may consider using digital tools to help get feedback from young people for example by promoting a facilitated youth engagement event, or activities and updates about city and youth collaboration.

Many climate organisations have arranged a 'youth social media takeover' - where youth shape the social media outputs for a day to mark things like youth climate strikes or important climate movement moments. This has been shown to help strengthen relationships with youth climate leaders and amplify their voices on an elevated platform. C40 can often provide notes and briefings on key youth moments.

It is important to also be conscious that there can also be digital divides among young people - for example, not everyone may have reliable access to the internet and digital platforms. You may consider working with a local organisation that engages youth in underserved communities and can help the city understand what channels or tools would work best, or if cities can help with digital access.

It's also worth remembering that youth climate leaders welcome public declarations of support for their activities. Afterall, their main purpose for engaging with local leaders is to gain solid commitments in line with what they, and many scientists, are calling for. You could consider that when youth climate strikes happen, that may be a great opportunity for the city to come out in support of the youth, highlight common ground and show evidence of strong city action.

How your city can put this into practice

- ☑ Share the news of key youth activities and moments on city social media platforms e.g. youth climate strikes and their key campaign messages.
- ☑ Consider a variety of engagement methods to get feedback i.e. avoid using only surveys to engage young people and think about facilitated in-person or virtual conversations too.
- ☑ Where relevant, the mayor could give endorsing speeches or promote youth events in person or on their social media channels.
- ☑ Facilitate social media takeovers, allowing youth to share their messages directly on the city's social media channels around key local or global moments or simply for educational purposes.

Salvador, Brazil

CASE STUDY

Youth participation in the city's decision-making processes has had a positive impact due to their capacity for political engagement on current affairs across social media platforms. The ability to influence, enhanced by the use of social networks, is a striking feature of the current generation of young people.

Salvador does not have any youth council with a focus on the climate, but it does have the Municipal Youth Council of Salvador (COMJUV), a permanent collegiate body, with an advisory and supervisory function. It is currently linked to the Municipal Secretariat for Policies for Women, Children and Youth. The Council is responsible for representing the young population in the Municipality.

The Council also includes representatives from across movements and civil society organisations. These include religious, youth, artistic, cultural, racial equality, LGBTQ, gender minorities, entrepreneurs, party political entities as well as people with disabilities/reduced mobility.

The use of COMJUV's social networks, especially throughout the pandemic, has worked as a method of getting closer to Salvador's youth through the dissemination of lectures, campaigns, and surveys. Representatives of the Council have sought to establish a municipal environment conducive to the engagement of youth on diverse issues and themes, as well as promoting connections with other councils and youth networks in the region. In addition to the dissemination of events, official networks propose debates and discussions on relevant and current issues, which directly impact young people. Such contact aims to better understand youth perceptions and concerns, and to encourage greater social participation in municipal decision-making processes.

In addition to the Municipal Youth Council, there is an example of SECIS (Municipal Secretary of Resilience and Sustainability) partnership with organizations such as Plant for the Planet, an institution led by young people that helps educate and train children and young people to fight the climate crisis by planting trees and acting as Climate Crisis Ambassadors.

The Municipal Youth Council stands out as a youth engagement platform with the potential for replication and scaling for wide-ranging municipal policy issues, in cities with diverse demographics.

Salvador © jeilson / Getty Images

London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine

CASE STUDY

The Children, Cities and Climate (CCC) project, led by researchers at the London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine (LSHTM), aims to understand and communicate young people's views of their cities and assess the potential child health benefits of improving urban environments. Youth engagement is a central element of the research project, which has been designed to involve young people from the outset and enable them to be spokespeople for the findings.

London © Aaron Gilmore

Alongside an analysis of the health co-benefits of radically cutting air pollution in sixteen global cities*, an online survey is being used to gather the views of children, young people and parents living in these cities. The survey includes questions on how young people feel about air quality where they live and asks what changes they would like to see to improve their environments. Participants for the survey are being recruited through social media, with adverts aiming to appeal to a broad group of young people, to make sure that a wide range of views are represented.

The findings from the co-benefits analysis and online survey will be shared with young people through various online and in person public engagement activities, including events, workshops, discussion groups and social media campaigns (on TikTok, Facebook, Instagram and Twitter). A set of policy briefs with city-level findings will be produced to provide a go-to resource for young people, decision-makers and other key stakeholders.

The project is also encouraging young people to engage creatively with the topic, for example through an art, design and music competition in Zimbabwe on the theme "The air we breathe in Zimbabwe's cities". A video featuring young people sharing their views on the topic and research findings will also be produced.

The research findings, video, artwork and music will be presented at COY16 and at COP26 in Glasgow, with the aim of mobilising more young people to engage with the critical intersection of climate change, cities and child health and influencing effective policymaking in this area.

* London, Glasgow, Milan, Quezon City, Los Angeles, Nairobi, Quito, Jaipur, Bhubaneswar, Dar es Salaam, Tamale, Lahore, Dhaka, Freetown, Mexico City, Harare

4. Partner with organisations

Many cities already have strong connections with a number of civil society organisations and groups. These groups can often play a helpful role in developing and strengthening relationships with youth climate leaders and their organisations.

Youth climate leaders may be engaged with a number of groups in the city, including campaign organisations, educational institutions, labour unions, indigenous communities, and faith-based groups. It's worth mapping out potential connections and partnerships. Identifying these links can help bridge the city to youth and where they are at.

Depending on the support provided and context, it may be worth considering compensating partner organisations. This could mean helping with costs to organise a meeting e.g. travel, room bookings, food, and facilitation.

How your city can put this into practice

- ☑ Map out youth and civil society organisations that you can engage with in your city. Consider thinking outside of the traditional climate groups and include other groups like health, housing and resident groups etc.
- ☑ Organise initial meetings with organisations that are willing to connect the city to youth organisations.
- ☑ Provide resources and meeting spaces for youth and partner organisations.

Austin, USA

CASE STUDY

The city of Austin enables youth climate activists to help shape the City's climate action agenda through engaging with City-affiliated youth climate organizations, including:

- The Texas Youth Climate Corps pushes for climate-friendly legislation at all levels of government.
- The Youth Forest Council is a paid internship program where participants engage the Austin community through public events and outreach.

"As the consequences of climate action (or lack thereof) will fall most heavily on young people, their involvement in any Climate Action Plan is essential."

– City of Austin

- Participants of Youth River Watch engage in data collection and publishing from Austin-area streams and rivers.
- The Austin Civilian Conservation Corps helps Austinites who have been economically impacted by COVID-19 earn income, serve their community, and gain skills that can lead to new environmental careers.
- Akins High School has a Park Ranger Cadet Program to increase equity in outdoor careers by providing a yearlong course and internship with the City of Austin's Park Rangers.
- Local nonprofit Ecorise has a Green Building Academy for high school students that focuses on sustainable careers.

As part of the Community Climate Ambassadors Program, young people were identified as a priority group to receive feedback from. Two ambassadors were recruited from local high schools to gather youth feedback on city climate action.

The city has also worked with youth artists through the Color Squad group at local non-profit Creative Action. This collaboration resulted in the creation of three youth-led sustainability murals in Austin.

"We have participated in youth-centered C40 events that give us an ear to youth climate activists from around the globe – their perspective is vital, as the effects of climate change will significantly impact their generation."

– City of Austin

Quezon City, Philippines

CASE STUDY

Quezon City is part of a global project initiated by the World Wide Fund for Nature Philippines (WWF-Philippines) and Plan International Philippines entitled: "Our City 2030: Youth Vision and Solutions". Through this partnership, young people from across the City have been empowered and engaged in various activities that enabled a deepened understanding and appreciation of climate change issues and sustainable development.

One of the outputs of the Our City 2030 project is a vision for a new Quezon City. The vision statement includes the priorities and aspirations of the youth for a progressive and peaceful city governed by upright leaders and officials. Young people envision a city where the voices of the youth are heard and citizens are united for a clean and safe environment, quality education, social, economic and healthcare services, effective and efficient transport system, and technological advancement by 2030.

Through the Our City 2030 project, youth forums were also held. These gave youth participants the opportunity to share their ideas in discussions with key stakeholders and city officials. The forums also provided a venue for young people to discuss their plans as future leaders of the city. The city government used their partnership with WWF-Philippines and Plan International Philippines as an opportunity to mobilize the youth in becoming the driving force for sustainable urban transformation and climate change.

Quezon City © Eric William M. Sandiego / Shutterstock

Although there is no specific "youth climate council," in Quezon City. Cities and municipalities in the Philippines have a "Sangguniang Kabataan" or a youth council that represents youth in local communities.The Sangguniang Kabataan in Quezon City is very active on climate change and sustainability. Young people frequently participate in city-led programs and projects. Their input and contributions are 'highly' valued by the city as it prioritises inclusive climate action.

Buenos Aires, Argentina

CASE STUDY

In June 2020, through a resolution published in the Official Gazette of the City of Buenos Aires, the Environmental and Sustainable Development Advisory was established. Its formation is framed around the commitments assumed by the city on the Environmental Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development, Law 3891 on Climate Change, adherence to C40 and the Escazú Agreement of 2018 - a regional agreement on Access to information, public participation and justice in environmental matters in Latin America and the Caribbean.

The mission of the Environmental and Sustainable Development Advisory Council is to assist and advise the Ministry of Environment in its role of planning, development and promotion of environmental public policy - it interacts with all government areas tasked with mitigating Climate Change.

The Environmental and Sustainable Development Advisory Council is made up of young people (over 18 years old) and adults who are members of civil society, trade associations, private sector companies, student centers of Universities and social impact entrepreneurs. The participation of the members of the Council is voluntary and there are different Commissions of Work responsible for Responsible Consumption, Biodiversity and Protected Areas, Food Sustainable, Gender and Environment, and the chamber of triple impact entrepreneurs.

Through the Environmental and Sustainable Development Advisory Council, youth have supported the following initiatives:

1. **Climate Action Plan 2050:** they were part of the co-creation with the technicians of the Government of the City of Buenos Aires.
2. **Colillas Law:** A project worked on in the Council was approved that makes visible issues in the city and fines those who throw cigarette butts on the ground breaking the law. The territorial activation was carried out on 9 July and an Awareness campaign was carried out in conjunction with members of the Advisory Council Environmental and Sustainable Development.

"The involvement of young people in decision-making broadens the possible solutions to the challenges posed by environmental management. In turn, it guarantees a channel of open and honest conversation regarding the expectations of each actor and the realities faced by each. This provides new innovative ideas and conveys appreciation and commitment to participation by taking their contributions into account."

– City of Buenos Aires

5. Understand where young people are at

Nearly 60% of young people surveyed in a recent global report described themselves as extremely worried about climate change and that their feelings about the climate crisis negatively impacts their daily lives. Youth from the Global South tended to report even higher levels of anxiety about being hard hit by the climate crisis.

It's important to do your best to understand where young people are coming from, their lived experiences and their daily lives. There will be a variety of youth experiences and all are valid. Navigating climate action and being a young person in the 21st century can be fantastic for some, difficult for others, and a mixed experience for many - it's therefore important to always remember that young people's lives are complex and that engaging with the city may not always be a straightforward endeavour. Youth also have a variety of communication styles and preferences and what works for some may not work for others - it's therefore a good idea to vary up the ways in which you communicate, consult and engage with young people.

One common concept that resonates with a significant number of youth is 'climate justice'. C40's solutions to solving the climate crisis always promote equity, so C40's guidance on framing the climate emergency and solutions around it should be particularly useful in discussions with young people.

How your city can put this into practice

- ☑ Acknowledge eco-anxiety and build resilience and self-care into your youth engagement work e.g. share techniques and resources that help youth cope with eco-anxiety.
- ☑ Provide accessible information about the city's strategies and approach to dealing with the climate crisis to demonstrate that the city is taking action.
- ☑ Frame your approach to tackling climate change through an intersectional climate justice lens.
- ☑ Support young people to engage where possible by providing support for expenses and/or compensating for their time, recognising young people have commitments of work and study.

Houston, USA

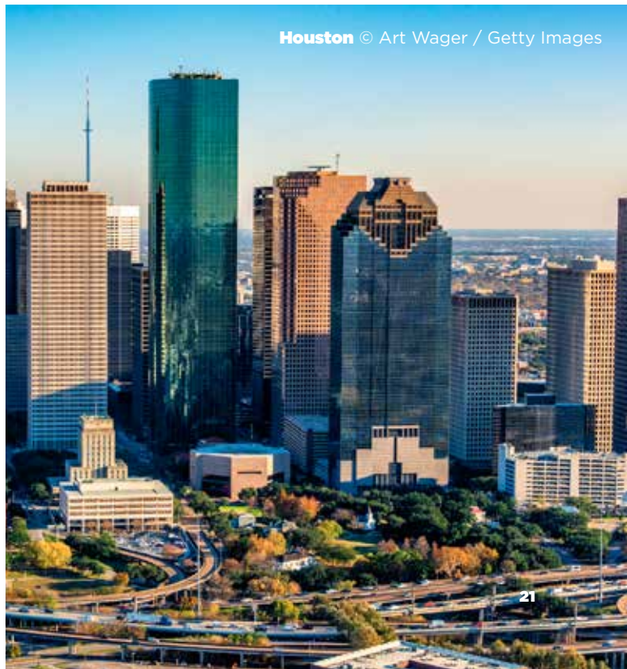
CASE STUDY

Houston is the fourth-largest city in the United States and has experienced seven federally-declared disasters in six years, five of those resulting in extreme floods. Following Hurricane Harvey (2017), the Mayor's Office of Resilience and Sustainability released the Houston Climate Action Plan (CAP) in 2020. The CAP provides evidenced-based measures to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and preventative measures to address the negative outcomes of climate change. The plan demonstrates how the City will adapt and improve its resilience to climate hazards that impact the city today as well as risks that may increase in the coming years.

To Mayor Sylvester Turner, an important component of the CAP is the goal of "preparing future generations for highly skilled jobs in the energy transition." To support the implementation of the CAP, the City created several community-led implementation working groups, including one dedicated to youth engagement. The Youth Engagement Working Group supports the City's efforts to achieve the CAP goal of being carbon neutral by 2050 by providing a dedicated forum for youth to interact with the City and other working groups on climate related challenges and solutions. At the recommendation of the Youth Engagement Working Group, the City formed the first-ever Youth Climate Ambassador (YCA) program.

The YCAs are trained to act as climate leaders in their communities–raising awareness about the impacts of climate change and gathering feedback from historically under-resourced communities on climate challenges and environmental justice issues. YCAs have conducted community engagement by delivering presentations to kids, youth, and adults, in addition to handing out flyers and meeting directly with community members. Their goal is to educate Houstonians on the CAP and encourage them to become involved in a variety of ways. A great testament to their efforts, in the summer of 2021, the YCAs worked tirelessly to engage youth and underrepresented communities on the CAP. They had significant success in engaging with kids and young people. The YCAs created an educational tool: a presentation focused on climate change in Houston that includes anecdotes about their own lives—creating a relatable example, and a new kind of excitement around climate action. The YCAs gave this presentation at several community centers within Houston's Complete Communities—ten historically under-resourced communities. The YCAs also created a survey that is intended to gauge the community's experience, concerns, and feedback about climate change and the City's response to it. In the future, the City will use information gathered from this survey to assess how Houstonians relate to climate change and use the results in updating and/or prioritizing sections of the CAP.

Youth are critical stakeholders who often understand climate change from a neighborhood standpoint and can bring a unique, more inclusive perspective. Many have lived through the disasters that have impacted Houston in the last few years, making it vital for the City to provide a platform for youth to voice their input and a legitimate path for their involvement in the implementation of the Houston Climate Action Plan. Mayor Sylvester Turner and City Council have supported the creation of clear access points for youth to voice their ideas and participate in climate action.



Houston © Art Wager / Getty Images

6. Engage young people as meaningfully as you would other stakeholders

Young people are an engaged group of advocates that are committed to progress and transformative change in cities. They are just as important as businesses, labour groups and other civil society organisations and are eager to be recognised as such. They are also at or approaching voting age and desire meaningful participation in democratic decision-making spaces. They are genuinely interested city residents and want to be a part of shaping their communities for the better. With the growing profile of the youth climate movement, cities should engage with young people in the same ways that they would with other stakeholders. For example, providing regular high-level engagement opportunities with senior city council members or seats on high-level committees addressing environmental issues in that particular city.

How your city can put this into practice

- ☑ Provide young people with the same opportunities that the city would provide other stakeholders eg. businesses and labour groups.
- ☑ Ensure that youth climate leaders have appropriate access to city officials.
- ☑ Consider youth representation in high-level committees - especially those that address climate issues.

London, UK

CASE STUDY

In 2020 the Mayor of London lowered the age from 18 to 16 for young Londoners to join City Hall's online community engagement platform; Talk London. This has allowed young Londoners to engage with issues across the Greater London Authority (GLA) policy landscape, which has included significant engagement on the city's Green New Deal (GND) ambitions, air pollution and other issues that have come to the fore for young Londoners during the pandemic. London has a Youth Assembly covering a range of policy areas including climate, whilst some of London's Boroughs have specific youth climate assemblies. The London Borough of Newham, for example, has held a climate assembly – and the London Borough of Lambeth has representation from youth councillors on their climate assembly steering group. Young Londoners also help influence the Mayor's policies through the Peer Outreach Workers (POWs) group. In 2006, the city established the POWs which is a group of young Londoners aged 15 to 25 years old. They are empowered by the mayor to engage, inspire, and gather the opinions of other young people in London. One of these Workers now sits on the GLA's GND advisory panel to ensure that the voices of London's youth are considered. When such a large focus of the GND is intergenerational fairness and equity, having diverse youth representation on the panel is an important measure. The city takes the voices of youth seriously, and ensures that there is youth representation on as many recovery boards as possible. An example of this would be the London Schools' Climate Kick-Start which will engage around 100,000 young Londoners with the climate emergency via hands-on and tangible activities, as well as funding schools to develop exemplar green projects. As well as engagement, the London Sustainable Development Commission has researched the views of over 2,000 young Londoners to help decision-makers understand their priorities for sustainability in London. Engagement with all Londoners and not just youth engagement, is a cross-cutting theme for all of the GLA's work on recovering from the pandemic. Bringing Londoners along on the journey is a vital part of the process for effective city governing.

London © Nicolas Mc Comber / Getty Images

7. Empower young people to be involved in city processes that are not just ‘youth-focused’

Young people care about a wide range of issues. The youth climate movement broadly takes an intersectional approach to climate action and cares about broader social, economic and environmental justice. The climate crisis encompasses every aspect of civil society, from human rights to workers rights to housing rights. This is the central concept of climate justice and it is vital that young people are engaged on a wide, intersectional variety of issues. For example, a significant number of youth climate leaders have been involved in racial justice and ecofeminist movements. Cities should feel encouraged to include youth climate leaders in consultative and decision-making processes that go beyond the strict definition of climate issues. Youth may also have strong views on the city’s budgetary processes and spending priorities that go beyond climate action.

How your city can put this into practice

- ☑ Ensure that young people are informed about key city processes e.g. city budgets that they may have feedback on.
- ☑ Provide appropriate updates to youth stakeholders about progress on important issues in the city.
- ☑ Recognise youth may be involved in a number of movements e.g. feminist, racial and economic justice movements and may want to get involved in city activity related to those issues.

Medellín, Colombia

CASE STUDY

The city of Medellín is in the final stages of launching a Municipal Youth Council. The Youth Council will be an independent body that will enable greater participation of youth in the city, as well as a consultative body for major decisions in the city. The Youth Council will be democratically elected, facilitate discussions amongst youth and will represent the interests and proposals of young citizens to the city government. It is expected that inclusive climate action will be a significant area of work for the Youth Council as experience has shown this is a top priority for young people, especially young women.

Currently, the Secretariat of Citizen Participation engages and works with children and young people to empower them to take action on issues they care about. In 2019, 30% of the 140 actions taken through the Secretariat of Citizen Participation were focussed on environmental issues. Examples of action included an environmental festival, neighbourhood cleanups and promoting better waste management. A record number of young people - 49,248 - took part in the Local Development Planning and Participatory Budget 2020 program. This is the highest level of youth participation in the history of the program. The city is also seeing a rise in the number of young councillors (aged 18-28) involved in Local Administrative Boards which play an important role in local decision-making. Since 2014, the city has had a program in place (‘Public Youth Policy’) which ensures that the youth of Medellin are recognised by the city as important contributors to strategic development, and as builders of democracy focused on harmonious coexistence in the city. For example, 521 young people actively contributed to the development of the Municipal Development Plan - Medellin Futuro 2020-2023, a proposal that focuses greater attention to the basic needs of city residents, care for vulnerable populations, economic recovery, and the construction of a sustainable city.

Medellín © Hispanolistic / Getty Images

8. Provide opportunities for youth leadership development

Developing leadership skills is an important aspect for a large number of young people when engaging with cities for change. Many current youth leaders may go on to be elected officials, or continue to play a role in their communities, national and international leadership. It is important to invest in the next generation and cities can play a vital role in training youth leaders to have even more impact.

Young people require support to engage fully with cities. It may be beneficial to identify learning and development opportunities, both formal and informal, that can support young people in cultivating their skills. Cities might want to consider providing coaching, mentoring and formal training courses to support skills development. These processes may help youth better understand and engage with cities. Unfortunately, many education systems don't empower young people to engage in social and civic issues, so it is important that learning and development programmes like these are made available.

Young people will often bring great insights to cities too. For example they may have great ideas and expertise in fresh strategies to engage citizens, having an intersectional approach to work, and utilising social media for maximum effect. There's a lot to be learned through collaboration!

How your city can put this into practice

- ☑ Invite external speakers and experts to help provide young people training and skills development opportunities e.g. guest speeches on policy areas that youth are interested in.
- ☑ Provide youth with an accessible understanding of how the city is governed and how they can engage in key processes e.g. feedback on budgets.
- ☑ Identify the learning and training needs of young people and work to deliver them through your engagement e.g. through skills training and practical experiences.
- ☑ Give youth leaders platforms and other opportunities to develop their leadership skills and confidence
- ☑ If possible, integrate teaching on the climate crisis and its solutions into school curriculums.

Freetown, Sierra Leone

CASE STUDY

In 2018, Freetown established Community Disaster Management Committees (CDMC) at Ward level to support the city's resilience. The CDMCs are community based and the root of community engagement in disaster and risk management at the local level. The youth is strongly represented in the committees. Through this initiative young people have been a key factor for the implementation of the Mayor Aki-Sawyerr's Transform Freetown Agenda including but not limited to the #FreetownTheTreeTown campaign to plant 1 million trees. As part of the campaign, they're acting for example as tree stewards or climate action ambassadors thereby raising awareness of the climate crisis in their communities. In 2020 - 250,000 trees were planted in 300 communities across Freetown and the neighbouring district council, Western Area Rural. 300,000 trees, shrubs and grasses including mangroves are currently being planted across four land-use typologies in the 2021 tree planting cycle. The tree planting work is mostly done by CDMCs who constitute more than 50% of the growing teams across the 13 catchments and 62 reforestation areas. While the city does not have a youth council, it recognises the need to build young people's capacity to engage in climate action, the need for skills training on alternative livelihoods for youth as well as the importance of involving youth in climate discussions at the city and community level. Through the employment of tree stewards and the training of climate action ambassadors, Freetown does not only aim at delivering on it's set out target to plant 1 million trees, but to also encourage Freetown's youth to be actively involved in the creation of a climate resilient city.

Freetown © viti / Getty Images

Paris, France

CASE STUDY

Paris has a “Conseil Parisien de la Jeunesse” (The Parisian Youth Council). The Council facilitates the engagement of young people in the work of the city for example inputting into the budget-setting. During the design of the last city climate plan, the Parisian Youth Council gave feedback on the plan that was formally submitted to the Paris Council.

2021 is a significant year for youth engagement in Paris as September sees the opening of The Climate Academy. Mainly dedicated to young people from 9 to 25 years old and to families, it aims to develop knowledge on climate and biodiversity while developing power to act. It is about putting young people and their families in a position to repair, make, analyze or even build advocacy. The ambition is to help young people build and develop their civic engagement. The Climate Academy relies on a collective of young people committed to the climate (the “Youth Coalition”) to help structure its roadmap.

Inspired by active pedagogies centered on projects and collaborative learning, it offers a range of courses led by City of Paris employees and associations:

1. Workshops to better understand the climate and environmental crisis, question the issues of the ecological transition in the broadest sense (climate, biodiversity and vegetation, waste reduction, reuse, water, travel, sustainable food, energy, building, etc.).

2. Modules to acquire skills for action: developing a plea, public speaking, collective problem solving, deciphering controversies, acquiring digital and practical skills (repairing objects, overcycling, discovering biodiversity, making everyday products and ethical fashion).

3. Sessions to support young people in setting up individual or collective projects in the field of ecological transition: with the installation of a project incubator, promotion of networking with the Parisian ecosystem that is professional or involved in the field of ecological transition, support for young people in finding funding and setting up associations, etc.

Paris © Ross Helen / Getty Images

Guadalajara, Mexico

CASE STUDY

Guadalajara’s Environmental Directorate, a department that is in charge of proposing and managing local public climate policies, is made up of 30% youth employees. These young staff members are proactive and dynamic specialists who have demonstrated a growing interest in the city’s climate actions.

The City also has a scholarship program for highschool and public college students between ages 15-29. As part of The Transcend Scholarship recipients of the scholarship are expected to participate in capacity building programs, tree planting as well initiatives aimed at maintaining public spaces.

The city views youth councils as an important space to enhance the participation of young people in order to ensure the future participation of responsible citizens committed to building a healthier, greener and cleaner city. In this way, cities can form close partnerships with change makers in their city. In addition, opening the doors for young people to form part of the public service in the city council would be a strategy that benefits any municipal agency and the development of the city.

Guadalajara © Lukas Pariza / Getty Images

Key Takeaways

“Young people today are facing a multitude of challenges - climate change, access to education, employment, housing. Not being able to engage from an intersectional perspective can be a barrier to achieving broader youth engagement on climate issues.”

– UMI Fund

Young people want to ensure that their needs and priorities are considered in climate action planning and policy development processes. They want opportunities to engage, inform and influence decision-making processes. By establishing youth climate councils or exploring ways to truly include youth in decision-making processes for example through working groups, advisory councils or annual forums, cities can feel better supported in shaping and driving inclusive action on climate change.

Here are some key takeaways to consider from this playbook:

1. Establish Youth Climate Councils

Establishing a youth council or equivalent mechanism for youth engagement is an important part of sustaining city climate action. Youth can support cities by creating new networks and partnerships with other community stakeholders which can provide cities greater support and positive impacts in designing and managing local climate action.

Cities with youth climate councils have the ability to strengthen their connections with youth and gain greater insight into young people’s priorities.

Suggested next step: Establish an initial agreement for collaboration between the city and youth activists that sets expectations, outlines responsibilities and helps foster trust and transparency. This could then be the basis for collaboration going forward, and would enable young people to shape what youth engagement looks like.

2. Strengthen existing youth councils

If your city has involved young people in decision-making processes, you may want to consider identifying new and existing opportunities that would benefit from input from youth in a sustained manner. You should also check in with your youth leaders and ask them to give feedback on how the council is going, what difference they think it’s making and anything they would change.

Youth Climate Leaders at Copenhagen Climate March C40 World Mayors Summit 2019 © Sarah Bastin

3. Promote cooperation and exchange with other youth organisations that don't directly engage the city

Cities should encourage the young people that they are directly in contact with to build networks and partnerships with other youth groups in the city. These partnerships can support and contribute to local climate action as it provides a wide range of young stakeholders a sense of ownership in influencing policy processes. This also encourages youth across the city to convey more coordinated messages to decision makers.

4. Develop opportunities for skills and leadership development

Being a part of a youth council can help prepare youth for future employment and develop important life skills. By providing opportunities for young people to learn and practice new skills, cities can support youth in increasing their confidence, competence and self esteem. It is also an opportunity for youth to discover new ways to make an impact in their communities. Cities should explore ways to offer youth hands-on experience as a part of young people's engagement in city decision-making processes.

5. Use social media connectivity to amplify awareness and impact, and share knowledge across networks beyond the city

Youth are likely to have strong digital capabilities, they are active on various social media platforms and have a high degree of interconnectedness. Cities should explore ways to increase their online reach as a strong social media presence can offer opportunities for accelerated climate action and increased engagement, for example through utilising social media platforms to strengthen youth and citizen participation in city decision-making processes, share knowledge, and amplify city actions on climate change.

6. Partner with youth in pushing for national level action as well that aligns with city-level progressive goals on climate

While cities are doing a lot to provide global leadership on climate change, establishing meaningful partnerships with youth can help further advocacy for greater climate ambition at national and international levels. To deliver a Global Green New Deal that is centered around social and environmental justice, cities should create safe and inclusive spaces and build alliances with youth towards advocating for ambitious action on climate change at the national level.

USA © Willie B. Thomas / Getty Images

7. Promote social inclusion, diversity, and equity

It is important to incorporate equity, diversity and inclusion in order to be accepted by a wide range of stakeholders. Cities should create a welcoming environment that has space for everyone. Input into decision-making should be elicited from a wide range of voices that represents and welcomes people from all genders, ethnicities, socio-economic backgrounds as well as disabled youth, and lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans youth.

8. Dedicate staff capacity for youth engagement

As illustrated in some of the case studies included in this guide, dedicating staff capacity towards youth engagement can make it more meaningful and likely for young people to engage with cities. A dedicated person or team can facilitate strong engagement with young people, and support the city with best practice on youth engagement and youth development in city hall and across the local community.

It could be worth investing in the skills development of staff to better understand how to engage young people offline and on digital platforms. You will also need to think about safeguarding and protecting the wellbeing of young people, as well as using different engagement channels to meet the needs of young people.

9. Embrace accountability from the youth movement

Young people often feel decision-makers – particularly at national level – aren't doing enough to address the climate crisis. They would like to see stronger leadership at all levels of government. A number of cities have found it useful to have a vibrant youth movement calling for ambitious climate action as it helps ensure that cities are taking actions aligned with the calls of its residents. The youth climate movement has shown that there is significant public appetite for bold climate action.

Cities have a real opportunity to show they are on the side of youth climate leaders and are also committed to building a fairer, greener and more equitable world. Cities can also show they are powerful partners and allies to young people. This could be a powerful alliance for change.

"Cities are vulnerable to climate change, but cities are also at the forefront of innovative solutions that can bring positive change for future generations. Youth should be at the centre of rethinking and redefining sustainable development in urban communities. We call upon youth to demand the change they believe in and urge all city mayors to involve youth in urban climate action."

– Ishita, Sujith, and Zihan - YOUNGO Cities Working Group Co-Facilitators. YOUNGO is the Children and Youth constituency to United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change

Conclusion

Young people have demonstrated their sheer determination and commitment to advocating for climate action at all levels of government. They have also often found engagements with government officials and decision-makers frustrating, and can feel like the pace of change isn't fast enough or the actions transformative enough. Cities have a real opportunity to work with the vibrant and energetic youth movement to develop empowering relationships that can deliver bold ambitious action at a city level. This can help set a powerful example to national leaders on what taking transformative action looks like, and further build pressure on them to do more at a national level.

Youth climate councils can ensure the unique perspectives and progressive ideas of young people are properly integrated in city decision-making processes. C40 can and will support cities in moving forward with the establishment of youth climate councils or equivalent bodies. The key considerations, case studies and key takeaways in this playbook have outlined some key elements of what is required to establish effective youth climate councils. We envision that this playbook helps further the empowerment of young people, ensures that their voices are heard in decision-making processes.

Critically, we also hope this playbook helps cities and youth find powerful allies in one another, enabling them to stand together against opponents of climate action. Through working together, cities and young people can start building a better, fairer and greener world - demonstrating leadership and providing much needed hope amidst the climate emergency.

Germany © Maskot / Getty Images

Resources

- Climate Outreach's Do's and Don'ts Briefing
- Case Study Tracker on Engaging with Youth and Children on Climate Action
- World Economic Forum's Global Shapers Community - Youth Recovery Plan Report
- Amnesty International's Staying Resilient While Trying to Save the World (Volume 2): A Well-Being Workbook for Youth Activists
- C40's Inclusive Community Engagement playbook
- YOUNGO Children and Youth constituency to United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
- Climate Caucus and Youth Climate Lab's Infiltration Manual: Pushing For Ambitious Climate Action At The Municipal Level'
- IgniteLA: Political Power in Every Young Women

For more information about some of the city youth engagement projects featured in this playbook, please visit:

- Auckland - Youth Advisory Panel / Te Rōpū Kaitohutohu Take Taiohi
- Buenos Aires - Green Schools
- Houston - Youth Climate Ambassadors
- London - Young Londoners' Priorities for a Sustainable City
- Los Angeles - Mayor's Youth Council For Climate Action
- Medellín - Citizen Laboratories | Digital participation in Medellín
- New Orleans - Youth Master Plan

Cape Town © AfricaImages / Getty Images

The C40 Knowledge Hub

For more cutting-edge insights and practical resources from leading climate cities like this visit the C40 Knowledge Hub.

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- Green Africa Youth Organisation (GAYO)
- The Global Shapers Community
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Annex: Top tips for youth climate leaders when engaging city leaders

This annex is written for youth climate leaders and contains top tips to help them better engage with cities. A number of youth leaders and organisations kindly shared their insights with C40 to inform the development of this annex.

> *"Young people are very mobilised on ecological issues, as they are clear about the situation, and are the people who will be most affected by the effects of the ongoing ecological crisis. It is important for young people to engage with cities and mayors, as about 54% of the world's population lives in urban areas, so the impact of change in cities is huge! Also, mayors are relatively more accessible than heads of state, and can initiate real change, and push for change in national policies."*
>
> **– Marie, Paris, France, Global Youth and Mayors Forum youth member**

1. Be determined

The number of natural disasters, resource shortages, and other crises has continued to rise, and extreme weather events have become more severe and frequent all over the world. What is worse, those who have contributed the least to climate change are the most vulnerable to its impacts.

These impacts can take a toll on your mental health, and the issue of climate change can sometimes feel insurmountable. Additionally, the work that you put into organizing and campaigning, getting your message out and staying up to date on the latest climate data can be draining and time-consuming.

It is important for you to identify coping strategies that can help you remain resilient. Make sure to support one another, take time out for your own wellbeing and remember that you are making a huge contribution to building a fairer, greener world for everyone.

Working with cities for action on the ground and working together to pressure national governments for action can have a hugely positive and tangible impact in addressing the crisis. Always remember you've got a powerful message that should be heard far and wide, and you're on the right side of history.

> *"I would like to say to other young people who engage with decision-makers: don't give up the fight despite the obstacles you may face with decision makers. They have to know that climate activism is not always easy for young people. They have to do their best in order to try to develop useful policies in the cities."*
>
> **– Djivenson, Port-au-Prince, Haiti - Global Youth and Mayors Forum youth member**

> *"When you schedule a meeting with a decision-maker, make sure you communicate with the secretary or someone in charge in advance about what will be discussed in the meeting. Don't just confirm the big agenda, talk to the city contact about the specific topics that you'd like to bring up at the meeting. This way, you can prevent a vague, fruitless meeting."*
>
> **– Dohyeon, Suwon, South Korea - Global Youth and Mayors Forum youth member**

> *"Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world."*
>
> **– Nelson Mandela**

Youth Climate Leaders at Copenhagen Climate March C40 World Mayors Summit 2019 © Sarah Bastin

“Breathe! Share your story. There is so much power in sharing your lived experience with a decision maker and connecting from the heart. Developing a rapport with decision makers can make it easier to stay connected with them and to follow up on their actions or lack thereof.”

– Nadine Clopton - Global NGO Executive Committee

“Be bold! Share your wildest dreams about the world you hope to see come to fruition. Invite your decision makers to join you in the act of reimagining our systems & cities. Framing is everything. If you frame climate advocacy through a lens of blame or shame, it can shut down a conversation pretty quickly. But if you invite someone to dream up a more beautiful world with you & then explore how to make that come to fruition, a new story has the chance to be born.”

– Nadine Clopton - Global NGO Executive Committee

2. Be prepared

Your active participation in engaging with cities can be sustained through sharing knowledge, developing your skills and feeling encouraged to seek and get involved in learning opportunities. While it is important that cities create opportunities for young people to meaningfully engage with decision makers and processes through educational programmes on city governance and climate education, it is also important as a youth climate leader for you to make efforts to be fully prepared for your engagements with city leaders. This could mean making sure you know what the agenda is and you have thought about key points that you would like to raise in the meeting.

3. Tell your own story

Young people have every right to engage in city level decision-making processes and should feel encouraged to tell their stories with decision-makers. Storytelling can be used to create empathy and build relationships. Sharing your personal story can be a powerful way to influence decision makers. It is important to only share what you’re comfortable sharing.

Here’s how you may want to develop a partnership with the city:

- Create a connection with city officials through telling your story (this guide can help you craft your story!)
- Frame a vision to inspire city officials and highlight common ground
- Develop a rapport with city officials that can help sustain long-term collaboration

“Be brave, be raw, be open. Show the world your journey so you can inspire others. Remind world leaders that as a young person, you shouldn’t have had to fight as hard as you do. Remind them of your resilience, of your expertise and of your empowerment and you will make real and tangible change. Sometimes, those in power will want to bury your story deep under the sands of time, so even just telling your story is an act of resistance. In unity, we can overcome any crisis and we can define whether our future will be equitable or filled with catastrophes.”

– Saoirse, Limerick, Ireland - Global Youth and Mayors Forum youth member

“Dream big and don’t limit possibilities - the times we live in demand it. But simultaneously be as specific as possible in advocating for a constructive path forward. Speak from personal experience and stories, while connecting that with the data and science.”

– Risalat, Global Shapers

Youth Climate Leaders at Copenhagen Climate March C40 World Mayors Summit 2019 © Sarah Bastin

"Bring clear asks that are actionable within city jurisdiction — avoid only using phrases like "adopt the green new deal," and bring together lists of specific actions that are broadly within city jurisdiction and have demonstrable environmental impact."

– Vancouver-based member of the Global Shapers Community

"Youth activists or groups should build networks and collaborations to streamline their activities and convey a coordinated message to decision makers. The essence of this is to prevent parallel activities or messages by youth activists or groups."

– Joshua Amponsem, Founder - Green Africa Youth Organisation (GAYO)

"Youth have a leading role in the climate emergency. Not only are they the ones who will suffer the most catastrophic effects of climate change, but they are also the ones who have proven to act on the crisis with international resonance. Therefore, they must be equipped with tools and opportunities that allow them to participate in important climate decisions. The future is built from intergenerational dialogue."

– Pamela, Mexico City, Mexico - Global Youth and Mayors Forum youth member

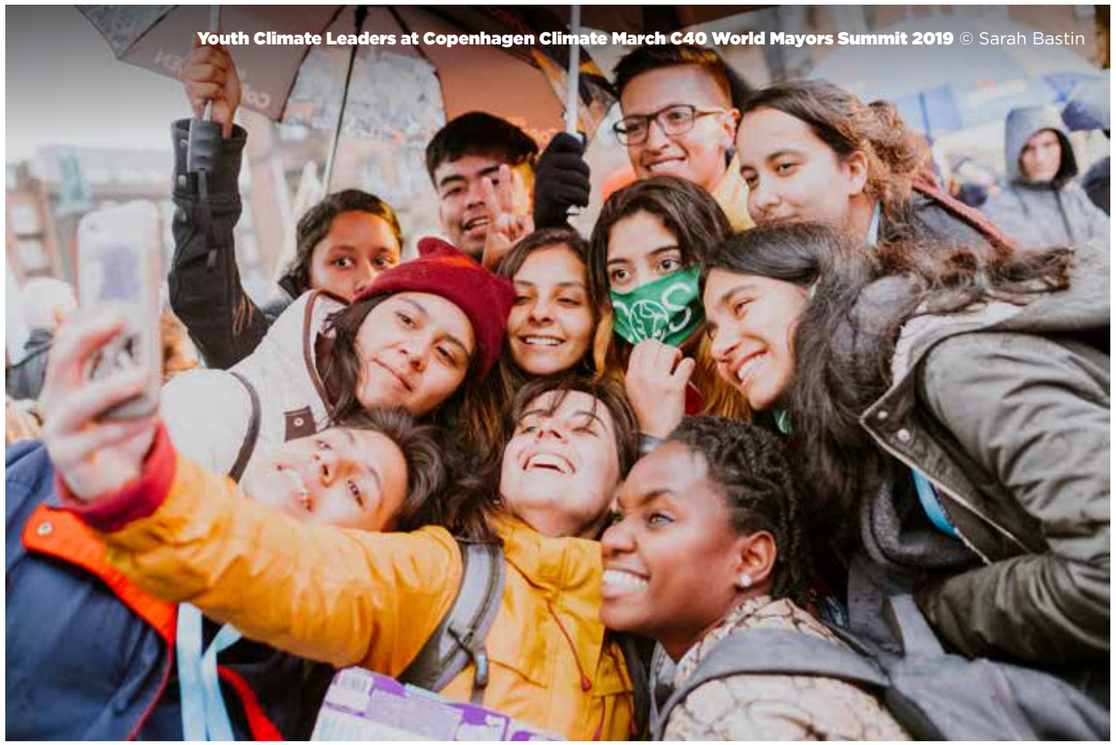
4. Bring clear asks

In your advocacy as a youth climate leader, it is important to bring clear asks and be as specific as possible about what you're asking cities to do. It could be useful to have some evidence to back up your asks, or examples of other places that are delivering what you're calling for. The C40 Knowledge Hub has a vast amount of expertise and insight into cutting-edge urban climate solutions and best practice guidance for cities.

City decision-making processes and their timelines can vary. Your city's website will usually have a guide on these processes. However, you don't need to be an expert to start a dialogue with city leaders.

5. Relationship building and collaboration with other organisations

Building strong relationships and partnerships with other organisations can be vital to the success of your campaigning. Working in alliance with other youth groups, labour unions, progressive businesses, NGOs and civil society groups can increase your reach across society and give you a greater chance of having an impact.



Youth Climate Leaders at Copenhagen Climate March C40 World Mayors Summit 2019 © Sarah Bastin

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